

SIMMONS COLLEGE EMOTIONAL SUPPORT ANIMAL POLICY

Policy Statement

Simmons College is committed to the full participation of all students, faculty, staff, administrators and visitors with disabilities in its programs and activities. Subject to the provisions of this policy, Emotional Support Animals will be allowed in designated areas of the College where their non-disabled peers are granted access¹. In general, reasonable Emotional Support Animal requests will be allowed in support of a person's access to or participation in College facilities, programs or activities. This policy is aligned with the College's broader mission to remove barriers that prevent qualified individuals with disabilities from enjoying the same employment, education, and other opportunities that are available to persons without disabilities.

Definition

An "Emotional Support Animal" is an animal that, through its mere presence, provides some therapeutic benefit to an individual with a mental or psychiatric disability. An Emotional Support Animal may be any animal and need not be trained to provide a specific task or skill so long as there is an identifiable relationship or nexus between the disability and the emotional support that the animal provides. The College is not required to allow an Emotional Support Animal anywhere on campus other than the College housing that is occupied by the person who requires the Emotional Support Animal unless that animal also qualifies as a Service Animal under the conditions of the College's 'Service Animal Policy.'

Determining Whether an Emotional Support Animal will be Accommodated

With respect to the Emotional Support Animals, a request for an accommodation must be made to the Disability Service Office as soon as the individual requests to live in campus housing or otherwise bring the animal on campus. Disability Service staff may require appropriate documentation from a medical or mental health professional with respect to the handler's disability and the manner in which the animal alleviates the effects of the disability.

The College need not accommodate an Emotional Support Animal if:

- the owner cannot care for it;
- the owner cannot effectively control it;
- it is not housebroken;
- it would pose a direct threat to the health and safety of others;
- it could cause substantial physical damage to the property of the College or others;

¹ Please note that an Emotional Support Animal is different than a Service Animal, and such animals are subject to different College policies. The different policies, as well as additional resources can be found at <http://www.simmons.edu/student-life/student-services/disability-services>

- it would pose an undue financial and administrative burden on the College; OR
- it would fundamentally alter the nature of the College's operations.

Responsibilities of the Handler

The person who requires the assistance of an Emotional Support Animal is responsible for keeping the animal harnessed, leashed, or tethered at all times, *unless* these devices interfere with the Service Animal's work or the individual's disability prevents using these devices, in which case the handler must maintain control of the animal through voice, signal, or other effective controls.

The person who requires the assistance of an Emotional Support Animal is responsible for:

- feeding and otherwise caring for the animal;
- properly disposing of the animal's waste or, if unable to properly dispose of the animal's waste without assistance, coordinating with College staff for the proper disposal of the animal's waste; and
- maintaining the animal's health and keeping up to date with immunizations/vaccinations, which the College Reserves the right to inspect annually.

The person who requires the assistance of an Emotional Support Animal is also personally and solely responsible for any harm or damage that the animal causes to persons or property.

Determining Where an Emotional Support Animal Can Go On Campus

The College's expectation is that Emotional Support Animals will reside in the handler's personal residence. However, the College understands that certain animals cannot be kept inside and may need to be exercised or otherwise access other spaces on campus. To the extent that the Emotional Support Animals need to travel beyond the handler's personal residence, the College requests that the handler maintain control of the animal and may only bring it to places that could be accessed by the general public and that are approved by Disability Services. For example, once approved, emotional support animals may access common areas on the way outside of a dormitory or when walking around campus, however, they may not be brought to other housing facilities, libraries, academic buildings, labs, the student center, the dining halls, to classes or in the classroom buildings, or any other area in which it may interfere with another member of the college community.

Health Related Conflicts

Disability Services, in conjunction with housing personnel, will make reasonable efforts to notify tenants in the residence building where the Emotional Support Animals are approved to reside. Students with medical condition(s) that are affected by animals (e.g. Respiratory diseases, asthma, severe allergies) are asked to contact Disability Services if they have a health or safety related concern about the exposure to an Emotional Support Animal. The College is prepared to also reasonably accommodate individuals with such medical conditions that require

accommodation when living in proximity to the Emotional Support Animals. Disability Services will resolve any conflict in a timely manner and will consider the conflicting needs and/or accommodations of all persons involved. In the event that an agreement cannot be reached, Disability Services' decision is final and not subject to appeal.

Making Requests

Student requests for accommodation and/or questions about pertaining to this policy should be directed to the Disability Services Office. The Disability Services Office may be reached at (617) 521-2474 or via e-mail at timothy.rogers@simmons.edu.

Employee requests for accommodation and/or questions pertaining to this policy should be directed to the Human Resources Office. The Human Resources Office may be reached at (617) 521-2086 or via e-mail at hr@simmons.edu.